

November 4, 1955

Dr. Riley D. Housewright
Chief, MB Division
Camp Detrick
Frederick, Maryland

Dear Dr. Housewright:

I have no hesitation in answering your letter of October 25 with the opinion that Dr. Atwood is one of the most brilliant people that I know, that his competence in microbial genetics is beyond question, and that his abilities go far beyond the field. If you can engage a sincere interest on his part for his mission, I could not conceive that you could find any one better suited to it. If that mission is basic research in microbial genetics, coupled with a consultative relationship to your applied programs, this question need not be pursued. If he is going to be expected to play a more direct role in your applied program, or if he will be under any pressure not to pursue his own research by his own lights, I would have to recommend that you raise this question with him, and reach your own detailed conclusions about his attitudes to the position.

Please do not mistake the brevity of this letter for diffidence. My unreserved respect and admiration for his abilities are just that, and I have known him quite closely for over twelve years— in fact, I learned a good deal of genetics from him, when we were both medical students, and roomed together.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics